

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 19

By Ramsey

A RESOLUTION to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the
Bristol Chamber of Commerce.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those institutions and organizations which have contributed to the growth and betterment of the communities they serve; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy institution is the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, which has labored assiduously to promote the well-being of not only its membership but all the people of the Tri-Cities region; and

WHEREAS, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce will celebrate its 100th anniversary on May 7, 2009, a century after its very first meeting, when it was known as the Board of Trade and included approximately forty members; and

WHEREAS, beginning with its promotion in 1911 of improved roads and highways for the people of the Tri-Cities area, the Chamber has consistently demonstrated a deep interest in the region's infrastructure, which has led to the growth of local tourism and commerce; and

WHEREAS, during the First World War, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce lent its full support to the nation's war effort, helping the Red Cross assist soldiers on their way from East Tennessee to Europe, promoting the sale of war bonds, organizing scrap metal drives, and encouraging the region's citizens to plant victory gardens; and

WHEREAS, the name of the organization was officially changed from the Board of Trade to the Bristol Chamber of Commerce in August of 1918; and

WHEREAS, in the decade after the Great War, the members of the Chamber encouraged the citizens and community leaders to pave city streets, erect a new hospital,

initiate a bus service, and even build an airport, though aviation was still a fledgling enterprise; and

WHEREAS, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce sought to assuage the suffering of the Great Depression by promoting the Community Chest and educating the public on Social Security and other New Deal innovations; and

WHEREAS, the Chamber's activism helped bring about the opening in 1937 of McKeller Field, now known as the Tri-Cities Regional Airport; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce chose to lend their assistance when their country and region needed it desperately during World War II, aiding in the establishment of the U.S. Navy's shell loading plant and the Twin City Service Center, where members of the armed forces could enjoy some comfort and relaxation in the midst of that terrible conflict; and

WHEREAS, the 1950s saw the Chamber endeavoring to increase the region's industrial output, a development the Chamber heartily promoted by attracting the Sperry Farragut Plant and Raytheon Manufacturing Company to the area; and

WHEREAS, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce enjoyed a period of especially vigorous activity in the 1960s, during which it promoted an expansion of Bristol Memorial Hospital, encouraged downtown urban renewal in Bristol, and continued to lobby for the improvement of area roads and transportation services; and

WHEREAS, the Chamber's membership increased by a record fifty businesses in 1964, bringing the total to 575 and, in 1965, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce became the first chamber in Tennessee or Virginia to be accredited by the United States Chamber of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce began to promote the establishment of a medical school at East Tennessee State University, a goal which was achieved in 1974 when legislation was passed directing the development of the James H. Quillen College of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, determined to help preserve the integrity of Bristol's natural environment, the Chamber initiated its "Keep Bristol Beautiful" program in 1983, and a campaign was started

in 1988 to get Bristol designated as a “Tree City USA” by the National Arbor Day Foundation, a goal achieved in 1996 after one million trees had been planted in and around the city; and

WHEREAS, thanks to the considerable efforts of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, the historic Paramount Theater for the Arts on State Street was renovated in 1991. Built in 1931, the Paramount is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the City of Bristol was officially recognized as the “Birthplace of Country Music” by the United States Congress in 1998, a goal the Chamber had worked toward throughout the decade; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce helped the Tri-Cities region to win the coveted National Civic League’s All-American City Award, an award granted on the merits of the community’s commitments to healthcare, youth empowerment, tourism, and indigenous heritage; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce received a Five-Star Reaccreditation from the United States Chamber of Commerce and a Two-Star Quality Commitment Award from the State of Tennessee, a considerable achievement, given that a Three-Star ranking is the highest possible; and

WHEREAS, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, over the entire course of its 100-year history, has proven itself to be a steadfast advocate for the people of the Tri-Cities area; and

WHEREAS, the Chamber has endeavored to promote economic prosperity, encourage the preservation of the region’s natural beauty, and ensure the health and wellbeing of all those within its purview; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate the Bristol Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of its 100th anniversary and extend to that distinguished institution our best wishes for success in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.